A

LETTER

FROM

EARL *STANHOPE*,

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

EDMUND BURKE:

CONTAINING A SHORT

ANSWER to his late SPEECH

ON THE

FRENCH REVOLUTION.

SECOND EDITION.

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A LETTER FROM EARL *STANHOPE*, TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE *EDMUND BURKE*.

MANSFIELD STREET, Feb. 24, 1790.

SIR,

IT was with regret, and with no ſmall degree of ſurpriſe, that I read, yeſterday, a Pamphlet purporting to be the ſubſtance of your *Speech* in the Houſe of Commons, on Tueſday the Ninth inſtant, in which it is ſtated to be of conſequence to you not to be *miſunderſtood*. I ſhould have been ſtill more aſtoniſhed at that moſt extraordinary Production,

had I not had former opportunities of obſerving the curious tenets of your Political Creed.

You ſay that "*the French have made "their way through the deſtruction of "their Country, to a bad Conſtitution, "when they were *abſolutely in poſſeſſion "of a good one!*" And the preciſe time that you fix for the happy period of this GOOD *Conſtitution* was "the day "the States met in ſeparate Orders." You know, Sir, that at *that time*, the Baſtile exiſted, the practice of Arbitrary Impriſonment exiſted, no *Habeas Corpus* was then eſtabliſhed, no Trial by Jury was then known in that Country, nor had it even been moved for in the National Aſſembly; there was then no *Declaration of Rights*, no Liberty of the Preſs;

* See page 17 of Mr. Burke's Speech, printed for Debrett in Piccadilly.

nor

nor had the Nation even the ſemblance of a *free* Conſtitution. Nay, ſuch was the horrid extent of Deſpotic Power, and ſo numerous were the Perſons who had been its Victims, that it was not till ſeveral months after the *happy period* you allude to, that the National Aſſembly could find out the Multitude of Perſons arbitrarily impriſoned throughout the Kingdom, or even the *places* of their confinement; nor could this diſcovery be made, till the National Aſſembly, on the ſecond of *laſt* month, voted the following Reſolution; videlicet, * that "all "Governors, King's Lieutenants, Com-"manders of State Priſons, Goalers, "and Superiors of *Religious* Houſes, and "all Perſons charged with the cuſtody "of Perſons impriſoned by *Lettres-de-*

* See page 29 of the No. 165 of the *Procès-Verbal* of the National Aſſembly, printed by their order.

" *Cachet*, or by any Order whatſoever " of any of the Agents of the Execu- " tive Power, ſhould make to the Na- " tional Aſſembly a true Report con- " taining the Names, Sirnames, and " ages of the different Perſons in their " cuſtody, together with the cauſes and " the date of their detention, and an " Extract of the reſpective Orders by " virtue of which they were kept in " confinement." Such were the bleſſed effects of that *good Conſtitution*, of which, you ſay, the French were at that time in *abſolute poſſeſſion*.—At the time when that *good Conſtitution* exiſted, Public Offices were ſold, and Judges were privately *ſolicited* to diſtribute Public Juſtice to Individuals. The common People were borne down by oppreſſive Services, and by unequal and galling Taxes, from which the opulent were free. Feudal Tyranny

Tyranny exiſted, and the abject ſtate of Vaſſalage exiſted alſo. A Neſt of Government Spies ſwarmed throughout the Country; and in *Paris*, they were ſtationed even in *private* Houſes. The People ſaw their Fellow Citizens (and often their *beſt* Fellow Citizens) thrown into *Dungeons*, and kept in Chains, detained for years in thoſe ſolitary and dark Cells of Deſpotiſm, without any public accuſation, without the poſſibility of obtaining any Trial, or of procuring any redreſs, and even without being informed of the ſuppoſed offences of which they were baſely and ſecretly accuſed, or of the names of their accuſers. This was their *good* Conſtitution!—But, *excellent* as it was, the People could no longer *bear* it.

In addition to all this, the Nation, afterwards, ſaw their Capital ſurrounded by

by *foreign mercenaries*, joined to their ſtanding Army, who had been ordered thither, to over-awe the National Aſſembly, and to intimidate the People. And I know, for certain, from thoſe who were at *Paris* at the time, that the Citizens univerſally expected, that, that Metropolis was to be attacked by the Soldiery, in the *dead of night*.

The People, moreover, from the great ſcarcity of corn, were then *literally ſtarving* for want of bread: and *that*, at a time when that horrid ſcarcity was ſuppoſed (and perhaps not without juſt cauſe) to be, in great meaſure, *artificial*. Was it to be ſuppoſed that, under *ſuch* circumſtances, an oppreſſed, a threatened, and a famiſhed People would proceed upon abſtract Ideas of Metaphyſics, or would even act, in all reſpects, with that perfect temper and moderation which,

which, under *other* circumſtances, they might have done? Any Man who could expect this, muſt know but *little* of human nature!

France contains between five and ſix times as many Inhabitants as England and Wales together. They are ſpread over an immenſe Kingdom, and in ſome parts of the Country their Poverty is exceſſive. That Poverty has been produced by their former deteſtable and arbitrary Government, and by their mad Wars, occaſioned, not by the wiſhes of the People, but, by bad Adminiſtrations in that Country. Penury and Diſtreſs muſt ever create diſcontent, and the exceſs of miſery will originate deſpair.—To ſpeak, then, diſpaſſionately and fairly upon the ſubject; whatever may have been, in particular places, the effects of popular deſperation, thoſe

Events

Events are NOT to be attributed to the form of their *new* Conſtitution, which did not even, at that time, exiſt; but, they are to be aſcribed ſolely to their *old* wretched and execrable Government, which had been, for ages, the cauſe of the People's oppreſſion, of their indigence, miſery, and conſequent deſpair. It was that execrable and wicked Government that provoked the violent inſurrections that have happened in France. To that wicked Government, therefore, is to be aſcribed all thoſe misfortunes to individuals, which the Friends of humanity will lament. Thoſe inſurrections and misfortunes (conſidering their *cauſe*) are themſelves the ſtrongeſt proofs of the neceſſity that there was, for the People to throw off their yoke, and effectually to break aſunder the Chains of Tyranny.

The

The change of Government in France, when completed, is likely to be the ſource of happineſs to that kingdom: and, inaſmuch as it is an unparalleled example of public Spirit to other enſlaved Nations upon the Continent, it is likely to be the ſource of happineſs to Europe. The Revolution Society in London have therefore, with an heartfelt ſatisfaction, *rejoiced* at this great event; although Mr. *Burke* pours forth, on the occaſion, Lamentations as bitter as thoſe of *Jeremiah!*

The Revolution Society had additional reaſons for the pleaſure that they expreſſed. We conſidered that what had happened in France held out a fair proſpect of the continuance of *peace* between the two Nations: and every obſervant Perſon muſt have perceived how much this Country was ſinking at the time of

the accurſed American War, and alſo how rapidly it has been riſing ſince. It is to the timely *making of the peace*, more than any other cauſe, or united cauſes, that our *preſent* proſperity is to be aſcribed. Was it then unnatural that Engliſhmen who have been Witneſſes of theſe good effects of peace, ſhould wiſh for its continuance?

France has, hitherto, been conſidered by the People of England, as a reſtleſs and perfidious neighbour. Not becauſe individuals in France are more treacherouſly inclined than individuals in this Country: but, becauſe a Government *conſtituted* as theirs *was*, could never be relied on longer than from day to day. When that Country, as in the two former Reigns, was governed one hour by a Miſtreſs, and the next by any artful Sycophant at Court, their Adminiſtration could be but capricious.

capricious. It appeared treacherous, becauſe it was verſatile; and it was verſatile, becauſe it was guided by Intrigue. An abſolute Government is generally proud, captious, and quarrelſome. A deſpotic Miniſter is generally ambitious. Conſequently, we cannot wonder at the former empty projects of ambition of the Court of France.

Whereas, ſince the Revolution, in that Kingdom, there is far leſs danger of their making Wars from motives of ambition. It is not for the Intereſt of the *People of France* to go to War with Great Britain, any more than it is for the Intereſt of the *People* of this Country to go to War with them. It is, therefore, to be expected, that under their *new* form of Government, in which the *People* have ſo much weight, the Repreſentatives of that people will neither dare, nor be inclined, to

adopt a Syſtem of Politics that would be evidently contrary to the Intereſts of the majority of that Nation, and contrary, as we have reaſon to believe, to their wiſhes alſo.

Have you forgot the Votes of the National Aſſembly reſpecting their not making Wars of ambition? Have you never read the Letter which the *Archbiſhop of Aix*, Preſident of the National Aſſembly, wrote, by order of that Body, to the Chairman of the Revolution Society in London? The Archbiſhop expreſſes himſelf in the following manner. " The Nation appeared to be carried, " as by an univerſal impulſe, to thoſe " changes which now conſtitute its " ſtrength and its ſtability.

" A King whom we may call the *beſt* " of Men, and the *firſt* of Citizens, en- " couraged by his virtues the wiſhes of

" the

" the Nation; and now, by univerſal
" concurrence, a durable Conſtitution is
" eſtabliſhed, founded on the unalien-
" able rights of Men and Citizens.

" It undoubtedly belongs to our age,
" in which reaſon and liberty are ex-
" tending themſelves together, to extin-
" guiſh, for ever, national hatred and
" rivalſhip.

" We muſt not allow prejudices,
" which diſgrace Nations, to produce
" Wars, thoſe *errors* of Governments.
" But, the two moſt enlightened Na-
" tions of Europe ought to ſhew, by
" their example, that the love of one's
" Country is not inconſiſtent with ſen-
" timents of humanity.

" The National Aſſembly diſcovers,
" in the Addreſs of the Revolution So-
" ciety of England, *thoſe Principles of*
" *univerſal benevolence which ought to*

" *bind*

" *bind together, in all the Countries of the*
" *World, the true Friends to the happi-*
" *neſs and liberty of Mankind.*"

The deſire of cultivating a friendly underſtanding with Great Britain, has lately manifeſted itſelf in many parts of that Kingdom. They conſider the People of England, as Men who profeſs the *ſame political Truths* with themſelves; and who, in the laſt Century, ſet them the *glorious Example* which *they* follow at preſent. I truſt that this favourable diſpoſition of the Patriots in France towards this Country, will not be in the leaſt altered, by any of the declamatory Speeches you may ever make, or by all the ſpeculative Pamphlets you can ever publiſh.

Mr. *Fox* and Mr. *Sheridan*, to their immortal honour, have openly differed with you upon this ſubject. And it is, Sir, conſidered by the Public, as a ſtrange

whim,

whim, that a Man ſhould pick a Quarrel with a Friend, *becauſe* he happens to differ from him about the internal politics of a *foreign* Nation: but, it is conſidered as being more than a whim, when that Friend is *ſuch* a man as Mr. *Sheridan*, whoſe ſplendid Abilities are univerſally acknowledged, whoſe keen and brilliant Wit is only to be excelled by his natural good humour, and whoſe liberal principles are not leſs conſpicuous, than his manlineſs, activity, and reſolution. One ſhould have thought, that ſuch qualities, even in a Stranger, might have inſpired ſome reſpect.

After having attacked your Friends, you might naturally be expected to direct your Shafts alſo, againſt thoſe who have not aſpired to that diſtinction; and you appear to deem the Revolution Society in London a proper object. No

wonder

wonder that you ſhould reſign your pretenſions to what you have ſarcaſtically called *the applauſe of Clubs*. From your diſreliſh of popular Meetings, it may be ſuppoſed that you have not entirely forgotten your expulſion from *Briſtol*, or the reception you met with at the *Buckinghamſhire* County Meeting.

In your ſpeech, you allude to certain "*wicked perſons**" (to uſe your own elegant expreſſion) "who have ſhewn," you ſay, "a ſtrong diſpoſition to imi-"tate the French Spirit of reform;" but, who the perſons are, who are glanced at, by this *dark* inſinuation, it is difficult to determine. But, from the title of another Pamphlet, which an Advertiſement in the Papers has announced is ſpeedily to be expected *from you*, it is

* See page 15 of Mr. Burke's Speech.

conjectured,

conjectured, that the Revolution Society in London was in your contemplation when you made that Speech. Let the Public judge, from the following words of their Reſolution, whether that Society have been blameable, or praiſe-worthy.

" At the Anniverſary meeting of the " Society for commemorating the glori- " ous Revolution of 1688, held at the " London Tavern on the 4th of Novem- " ber 1789, Dr. Price, moved the fol- " lowing Reſolution which paſſed una- " nimouſly, and it was alſo reſolved that " the ſame be tranſmitted to the National " Aſſembly of France, ſigned by the " Chairman :

" The Society for commemorating the " Revolution in Great Britain, diſdain- " ing National Partialities, and rejoicing " at every triumph of Liberty and Juſ- " tice over Arbitrary Power, offer to the

" National Aſſembly of France, their " congratulations on the Revolution in " that Country, and on the proſpect it " gives to the two firſt Kingdoms in the " World, of a common participation " in the bleſſings of civil and religious " Liberty.

" They cannot help adding their " ardent wiſhes of an happy Settlement " of ſo important a Revolution, and " at the ſame time expreſſing the par- " ticular ſatisfaction, with which they " reflect on the tendency of the glorious " Example given in France to encou- " rage other Nations to aſſert the un- " alienable Rights of Mankind, and " thereby to introduce a General Re- " formation in the Governments of " Europe, and to make the World free " and happy."

This was that *abominable* Reſolution, which

which thoſe "*wicked Perſons*" voted, and which, as their Chairman for the day, I had the *honour* to ſign.

It is, however, only matter of conjecture who the "*wicked Perſons*" were, to whom you have alluded. *If* to the Members of the Revolution Society, it is fit, Sir, that you ſhould learn, that they are Men who are Friends to Liberty, and that they are, *therefore*, firm Friends to our *free* and excellent Conſtitution. They meet to commemorate the paſſing of the *Bill of Rights*, and the glorious *Revolution* of the laſt Century, the true Principles of which they will ever he ready to defend. They know that the Rights of the illuſtrious Family upon the Throne, are founded upon thoſe ſacred Principles; and (independently of Perſonal reſpect for the Princes of that Houſe) every

Whig feels a warm conſtitutional attachment to that Family, becauſe *their Rights* depend upon the *People's Rights*, which they were brought to this Country to maintain. Nor has the Revolution Society ever ſhewn itſelf deficient in the reſpect due to his Majeſty himſelf. No Member of the Revolution Society was ever heard to ſay, that "the King had been *hurled* by Provi-"dence from his Throne," becauſe our gracious Sovereign had the misfortune to labour, for a time, under bodily infirmity.

You blame the French for having gone too far in the alterations they have made in their Conſtitution; and you accompany this opinion with a ſtring of abuſive epithets * too impaſſioned to be worth

* "An irrational, unprincipled, proſcribing, con-"fiſcating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyran-"nical

worth repeating. Whether the French have gone too far or not, in their conſtitutional alterations, can be known *only* by thoſe who have been Eye-witneſſes of the whole of the tranſaction, who have been fully informed of the motives that actuated the Leaders of the National Aſſembly, and who have had accurate information reſpecting the Opinions of the People of that country relative to the form of Government to be eſtabliſhed. Therefore, upon thoſe topics, the Revolution Society has pronounced *nothing*. But, as *Whigs*, they exulted over the demolition of the Baſtile, and over the ſtill more important downfal of ſyſtematic Tyranny. That Revolution has given a wholeſome leſſon to *Tories*, and a ſalutary leſſon to *Tyrants*, in all the de-

" nical democracy." See page 12 of Mr. Burke's Speech.

ſpotic

ſpotic Countries upon earth, by teaching them, that Men, by becoming *Soldiers* ceaſe not to be *Citizens*; and that no *length* of oppreſſion can ever eradicate from the human heart, the warm feelings of human nature, or the immutable Principles of natural Juſtice.

All warrantable political Power is derived, either mediately, or immediately, from the *People*. All political Authority is a TRUST; and every wilful act of abuſe of that Authority, is a *Breach of Truſt*. The natural RIGHTS of the PEOPLE are ſacred and *unalienable*.—*Rights*, of which Deſpotiſm may *rob* them for a time, but, which it is not in the Power of Tyranny to *annihilate*. We, therefore, commemorate with rapture, the glorious Æra, when the *Army of England* nobly refuſed to overturn our *free* Conſtitution, and had the virtue to join the

the Standard of King William. And we exult (with Mr. Fox) that the *Army of France*, laſt year, followed that glorious Example, by refuſing to become the Inſtruments of the ſervitude of their Fellow Citizens.

You talk of "*Democracy**," and of a "*Mob of Democracies*." You reproach the National Aſſembly with having made and recorded, what you are pleaſed to call, "a ſort of Inſtitute and *Digeſt of* "*Anarchy*†, called the Rights of Man, "in ſuch a pedantic abuſe of Elementary "Principles as would have diſgraced "Boys at School." You ſtile it alſo a "*mad Declaration*."

In this "*Digeſt of Anarchy*" (as you term it) are contained the fundamental Principles of a *free* Government, and the

* See page 20 of Mr. Burke's Speech.

† See page 19 of Mr. Burke's Speech.

nobleſt aſſertions of the Rights of Men and Citizens. I have read that Declaration * of the National Aſſembly often, but never without peculiar ſatisfaction, becauſe that excellent *Declaration* is ſuperior, in ſome reſpects, even to our admirable *Bill of Rights*.

Such, Sir, being your Sentiments reſpecting *civil Liberty*, I will leave them with the Public, and conſider what you advance upon the ſubject of *Religion*, which is (if poſſible) ſtill more aſtoniſhing.

Speaking of the French, you ſay †, " On the ſide of Religion, the danger " of their Example is no longer from

* Thoſe Engliſhmen, who do not underſtand the French Language, will find a Tranſlation of the above-mentioned French Declaration of Rights, in the Appendix to the Diſcourſe on the Love of our Country, by the Rev. Dr. Richard Price, printed for T. Cadell in the Strand.

† See page 12 of Mr. Burke's Speech.

" *Intolerance*,

" *Intolerance*, but from *Atheiſm*." I know not what you have diſcovered in the Votes of the National Aſſembly, that can warrant you in advancing ſuch an Opinion. Is it true that, in their Journal, of the twenty-fourth day of December laſt, I find the two following incomparable Reſolutions; videlicet*, " The National Aſſembly Decrees, 1ſt, " That *Non-Catholics* who ſhall have " fulfilled all the Conditions required, " by its preceding Decrees, in order to " elect, and to be eligible, ſhall be

* See page 12, of No. 159, of the *Procès-Verbal* of the National Aſſembly, printed by their order.

" L'Aſſemblée Nationale décrète, 1°. que les Non-" Catholiques, qui auront d'ailleurs rempli toutes les " Conditions préſcrites dans ſes précédens Décrets pour " être Electeurs et éligibles, pourront être élus dans " toutes les dégres d'Adminiſtration, ſans exception.

" 2°. Que les Non-Catholiques ſont capables de tous " les emplois Civils & Militaires, comme les autres " Citoyens.

" capable of being elected into all poli-
" tical ſituations in the State, without
" exception.

" 2dly, That *Non-Catholics* be capa-
" ble of holding all Employments Civil
" and Military, like other Citizens."

By theſe juſt, and politic Reſolutions, the National Aſſembly have admitted *Proteſtants*, and other Claſſes of *Diſſenters*, into all Offices and Situations that are capable of being held by the Members of the Eſtabliſhed Church. They have thereby *united* and *conſolidated* their Citizens, and ſet an example of Wiſdom and Liberality, worthy of the imitation of *all their Neighbours*. Is this, Sir, what you call *Atheiſm?* If ſo, *Atheiſm* has got ſtrong footing in Scotland, where *the Teſt, and Corporation Acts* do not exiſt: and *Atheiſm* has ſtruck deep root in Ireland alſo; for, in Ireland that unwiſe,

unwiſe, unreaſonable, and unjuſt Law, the *Teſt Act*, has been repealed.

In France, they have aboliſhed *Tythes:* and ſo the Parliament ought to do in England, by ſubſtituting another mode of providing for the Clergy, leſs vexatious, leſs detrimental to Agriculture, more convenient for the Clergy, and leſs injurious to the Cauſe of Religion.

In France they have lately aboliſhed Monaſteries: in England we did ſo, long ago.

In France the National Aſſembly has diminiſhed the unreaſonable Revenues of the ſuperior Clergy, and thoſe alſo of the *Drones* of the eſtabliſhed Church, at the ſame time that it has increaſed the hard-earned Stipends of the laborious and inferior Clergy; and (if the information I have received be correct) above FIVE parts, out of SIX, of the *whole*

Clergy of the eſtabliſhed Church in France, have been GAINERS by the late Revolution. Is this what you call *Atheiſm?* It is what I call an Act of *Juſtice*, as well as a *fine ſtroke of Policy*.

Deſpotiſm in France, induced the Friends of Civil Liberty there, to eſpouſe the Cauſe of the *inferior Clergy*, whoſe juſt pretenſions to encouragement might otherwiſe have been forgotten.—Should a Spirit of *religious Perſecution* ever go forth in England, it may poſſibly induce the uniting Friends of *religious Freedom* to eſpouſe the Cauſe of the *inferior Clergy* in this kingdom. For, that uſeful, laborious, and reſpectable part of the Clergy of the eſtabliſhed Church, have, in my opinion, heavy Grievances to complain of: and better were it to redreſs thoſe Grievances, becauſe it is *juſt* to do ſo; than, by a *Syſtem of Intolerance*

lerance of any kind, to awaken the minds of men, by *ſtimulating* diſcuſſion upon *that* ſubject.

All Sects in this Country contribute their proportion, to the ſupport of the eſtabliſhed Church. Therefore, all Sectaries have as good a right as we have, to offer an Opinion reſpecting the diſtribution of their own Property.

You talk, Sir, in your Speech *, of the "Eſtates, of the *Splendor*, and of "the Orders and Gradations, and alſo "of the *Majeſty of the Church*." I have heard of the *Majeſty of Kings*, I have heard of the MAJESTY of the PEOPLE, I have heard of the ſpirit of *humility* of the Chriſtian Religion, and of its Apoſtles; but, this is the *firſt* time I ever heard the expreſſion of the "*Ma*-"*jeſty of the* CHURCH!"

* See page 29 of Mr. Burke's Speech.

The

The Revolution in France is one of the moſt ſtriking and memorable pages in Hiſtory; and no political event was, perhaps, ever more pregnant with good conſequences to future ages. That great and glorious Revolution will, in time, diſſeminate throughout Europe, liberality of ſentiment, and a juſt regard for Political, Civil, and Religious Liberty. It will, in all probability, make the World, for Centuries, proſperous, free, and happy, when the Author of the *Sublime and Beautiful* ſhall be no more, and the WHIG Principles from *St. Omers* * be forgotten.

I have the Honour to be,
SIR,
Your moſt obedient,
And moſt humble Servant,
STANHOPE.

* Note; by the *Principles from St. Omers* is here meant thoſe juſtly exploded Principles *technically* ſo called, and not any which may be held *there*, at preſent.